

March 31, 2015

Re:

SUPPORT of HB 6187, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS
and

SUPPORT of SB 1128, AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF ACCELERATED REHABILITATION IN THE CASE OF
ANIMAL ABUSE

Dear Co-Chair Coleman, Co-Chair Tong, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Please accept this testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 6187**, which would establish a process for appointing an advocate for an animal that is the subject of a criminal court proceeding, and in **SUPPORT of SB 1128**, which would prevent persons charged with committing animal abuse from using accelerated rehabilitation.

HB 6187 will help to facilitate animal cruelty prosecutions by ensuring appropriate representation for the victims.

SB 1128 will help to ensure that violence toward animals is taken seriously and promotes appropriately severe penalties as well as a record of these crimes in cases where people are responsible for causing animals to suffer.

In support of these two bills, please consider the following key points:

- Pet abuse is associated with domestic violence.
- Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes, including violence against people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses.
- A 2013 research report by the Office of Legislative Research ([2013-R-0148](#)) describes procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses from 2002 through 2012 (n = 3,699). Table 1 shows that 51% of offenses were nolle (this means that the prosecutor decided not to prosecute), 33% were dismissed, 0.2 % resulted in findings of not guilty, and only 16% resulted in guilty findings.

I strongly encourage you to read the OLR report ([2013-R-0148](#)) in order to get the big picture view of how animal cruelty cases are treated in Connecticut, namely, that very few are prosecuted. This systemic cruelty carries no consequences for the perpetrators. In January 2015, Stamford residents Eileen Lenihan and Jose Dejesus Rodriguez caused the euthanization of two horses due to intense neglect. They failed to nourish them, provide clean and healthy living quarters, and provide fresh water. These animals suffered such severe dehydration that the equine rescue organization needed to euthanize them. Luckily, an equine rescue organization seized the other horses on the farm. Let us ensure Eileen and Jose, and those committing similar egregious crimes become accountable for their actions. Please read the Stamford Advocate Police Blotter by clicking this [link](#).

The two bills cited above, **HB 6187** and **SB 1128**, will encourage animal cruelty cases to be taken with the seriousness they deserve.

With gratitude for your advocacy for animals,

Carol Nichols
Stamford, CT